

REMARKS

This application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated September 30, 2003. Claims 20-23, 26-28, 31-34, 36-38, and 60 are presented for examination, of which Claims 20 and 38 are in independent form. Claims 24, 25, 29, 30, and 35 have been canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter, as have non-elected Claims 1-19 and 39-59. Claims 20-23, 26-28, 31-34, and 36-38 have been amended to define more clearly what Applicant regards as his invention. Claim 60 has been added to provide Applicant with a more complete scope of protection. Favorable reconsideration is requested.

Claims 20-24, 26-28, 30-34, and 36-38 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,881,212 (*Morita*). Claims 25 and 29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Morita* in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,625,757 (*Kageyama et al.*), and Claim 35 was rejected under Section 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Morita*. Cancellation of Claims 24, 25, 29, 30, and 35 renders their rejections moot.

As shown above, Applicant has amended independent Claims 20 and 38 in terms that more clearly define what he regards as his invention. Applicant submits that these amended independent claims, together with the remaining claims dependent thereon, are patentably distinct from the cited prior art for at least the following reasons.

The present invention is directed to a printing method in which printing is performed by distributing a print job among a plurality of printing apparatuses. As discussed in detail in the specification, in conventional systems, when all pages of a print job cannot be printed on a printer for distributed printing, the sequence of the pages of the print job become mixed up if reprinting is carried out by automatically changing the

destination of the print job from the faulty printer to another printer. Thus, it is difficult for a user to ascertain which printing apparatus will print out information and how the information will be printed.

The aspect of the present invention respectively set out in independent Claims 20 and 38 addresses the foregoing problem by providing a printing system where a printing method is controlled in such a manner that printouts can easily be collected and put into proper sequence when a problem has occurred in any of the printing apparatuses during printing.

The aspect of the present invention set forth in Claim 20 is a control method. The method includes recognizing a status of a printing apparatus, and in a case of assigning at least a part of a print job to be printed by the printing apparatus to another printing apparatus in accordance with the status recognized in the recognition step, deciding the other printing apparatus from among a plurality of available printing apparatuses in accordance with the paper ejection type of the plurality of available printing apparatuses.

One important feature of Claim 20 is that in a case of assigning at least a part of a print job to be printed by the printing apparatus to another printing apparatus in accordance with the status recognized in the recognition step, deciding that other printing apparatus from among a plurality of available printing apparatuses in accordance with the paper ejection type of the plurality of available printing apparatuses. That is, in a case where at least a part of a print job which is printed by one printing apparatus is to be assigned to another printing apparatus, the other printing apparatus which is to continue the print job is decided from among a plurality of available printing apparatuses in accordance with the paper ejection type.

Morita relates to a printing control method and system for printing a document having a plurality of pages by a plurality of different printers. In Embodiments 1 to 3 of *Morita*, a faceup and a facedown printer are used for printing a document (Step S404 in Figure 4, and S704 in Figure 7). The two printers operate as a pair, such that if one printer fails, the other printer simply takes over printing the remaining print job of the failed printer (Figures 8 and 9). That is, the printer to which at least a part of a print job is to be assigned when the printer to which the print job was originally assigned fails is predetermined. Thus, the printer that takes over for the failed printer is not decided from among a plurality of printers based on the paper ejection type.

Embodiment 4 of *Morita* discusses a distributed print job using three printers. The three printers include a pair of faceup and facedown printers (Step S1004 in Figure 10) and second facedown printer (Step S1007 in Figure 10). The operation of the pair of printers in step S1010 is equivalent to the processing of steps S407 and S408 in Figure 4, or steps S707 and S708 in Figure 7. Thus, the operation performed when one of the printers fails is the same as that depicted in Figures 8 and 9 of *Morita* and as discussed above. Further, *Morita* is silent as to how the printing system handles a situation when the facedown printer selected in S1007 fails during the printing operation in step S1009 in Figure 10.

If more than three printers constitute a printing system in *Morita*, the printers are simply paired and the same processing as discussed above in connection with Embodiment 4 of the *Morita* is applied.

The printers in Embodiment 5 of *Morita* are controlled similarly as to Embodiments 1 and 3.

The Office Action cites column 1, lines 49-52, of *Morita* as disclosing the feature of deciding the other printers based on the ejection type. Applicant respectfully disagrees with this. Column 1, lines 49-52, of *Morita* merely discloses that when a failure occurs in any printer, printing is stopped in that printer and another printer automatically prints the remaining pages of a print job, and that the printing process is not influenced even when the printer that stopped recovers from the failure to restart printing.

Applicant submits that nothing in *Morita* would teach or suggest that in a case of assigning at least a part of a print job to be printed by the printing apparatus to another printing apparatus in accordance with the status recognized in the recognition step, deciding the another printing apparatus from among a plurality of available printing apparatuses in accordance with the paper ejection type of the plurality of available printing apparatuses, as recited in Claim 20.

Accordingly, Applicant submits that Claim 20 is allowable over *Morita*.

Independent Claim 38 includes the similar feature of, in a case of assigning at least a part of a print job to be printed by the printing apparatus to another printing apparatus in accordance with the status recognized in the recognition step, deciding that other printing apparatus from among a plurality of available printing apparatuses in accordance with the paper ejection type of the other available printing apparatuses, as discussed above in connection with Claim 20. Accordingly, Claim 38 is believed to be patentable for reasons substantially similar to those discussed above in connection with Claim 20.

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one or another of the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of

the invention, however, the individual consideration or reconsideration, as the case may be, of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,


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